

Fall 8-15-2007

## ENG 3009-004: Myth and Culture

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## English 3009G-004: Myth and Culture

3009-004

Dr. Miho Nonaka

Time: 11-11:50 a.m. MWF      Class Location: Coleman 3290

Office: Coleman 3821    Mail Box: Coleman 3155    Phone: 581-6972    Email: mnonaka@eiu.edu

Office Hours: MW 1-2 p.m., 3-3:30 p.m., F 1-2 p.m., and by appointment

**Course Objectives:** This course will provide an in-depth look at selected motifs and themes in the cultural mythology of East Asia. We will discuss how they manifest a culture's essential beliefs about the world and the meaning of human life, exploring the ways mythology and religion shape the notions of divinity, fate, ethical values, and what is considered elegant, beautiful in a specific society. Our goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the cultures the texts come from, and to broaden our awareness of how mythic motifs unfamiliar to us nonetheless can point to similar concepts and values. Our topics will include the function of myth in both ancient and modern societies, the relation between state and religion, cultural identity, ritual and aesthetic practices.

### Texts:

Endo, Shusaku, *Silence*

Hesse, Hermann, *Siddhartha*

Mishima, Yukio, *Spring Snow*

Saigyō, *Poems of a Mountain Home*

Tanizaki, Junichiro, *In Praise of Shadows*

Xeroxed handouts and electronic resources

### Policies:

\* You are expected to attend all classes. If you miss more than 3 classes, I will lower your final grade by a letter. If you miss 5 or more classes, you will either drop the course or accept an F for the semester. As outlined in the student catalogue, I will consider an absence excused only for "reasons of illness, emergency, or university activity." For each case, you must show me an appropriate document to verify your absence.

\* I will give unscheduled quizzes **frequently** to make sure you keep up with the reading. They are meant to be easy if you do the reading. These quizzes and in-class writing assignments must be turned in by the end of class, and cannot be made up at a later date; that is the reward for attending class regularly.

\* I expect you to arrive ready to participate in discussion. The quality as well as the frequency of your contributions determine a significant portion of your participation grade.

\* If you are absent, you are still responsible for knowing the material, completing all of the readings and turning in any assignments for that day. I recommend getting several classmates' phone numbers and email addresses so that you can keep up. Do not email me to ask for an "update" on missed assignments, or to explain an absence. Instead, I ask that you stop by my office during office hours or make an appointment so that we can talk.

\* Late comers (who arrive after 10 minutes) will receive partial absences, and must see me after class so I can mark their attendance. Every 3 instances of tardiness will count as 1 absence. Leaving the class early will be treated in the same manner.

\* Assignments must be handed in within the first 10 minutes of class on the day they are due unless we have worked out a prior arrangement. Work handed in after that time will lose one letter grade for each class period it is late. Any work turned in a week past the deadline will receive a zero. I will not accept assignments via email.

\* All assignments must be typed and printed in black ink, using 12-point Times New Roman font and 1 inch margins. Remember to include page numbers and staple your paper in the upper left-hand corner. When citing secondary sources, use the MLA style of documentation. You are responsible for saving copies of any work turned in for grading.

\* You are responsible for information given in class, including key terms, ideas and facts during both lectures and discussions. **Make sure to take good notes!** They will come in handy when preparing for midterm and final exams.

\* Cell phones must be turned off before coming to class and kept out of sight in our classroom at all times.

### **Grading:**

Professionalism (attendance, active preparation, participation and cooperation): 15%

Quizzes and in-class writing assignments: 10%

Presentation and leading class discussion: 15%

Midterm exam: 15%

One long essay: 20%

Final exam: 25%

To calculate semester grades, I use numbers rather than letters. These will convert into your final grade as follows: 91-100=A; 81-90=B; 71-80=C; 61-70=D. We may add, cancel, or revise some assignments. In that case, percentage totals may be adjusted also.

Note: I do not keep a running tally of your current grade from day to day, so please don't ask. You should keep your own record of your participation and all of your assignments.

**Professionalism:** Your attendance is crucial, as is participating in the discussions and bringing your contributions to the class. If you remain silent every class of the semester, expect a lower grade. Similarly, if you habitually arrive late or leave early, or if you cannot conduct yourself in a respectable manner, expect a lower professionalism grade.

**Presentation:** I will assign these presentations early in the semester. From your assigned reading, choose a passage that you find especially important or intriguing. You are free to do outside research to obtain background information on historical events, tradition and culture of the society the text portrays; but of course, your presentation has to be more than just background information.

Your main task is to analyze the significance of that passage critically, as opposed to responding to it personally and emotionally. It is not enough to have a vague sense of the plot or a certain character. You must present an interpretation of the passage beyond its surface-meaning; you should explain your interpretation by discussing imagery, symbolism, point of view, character development, setting, theme, etc.. What key issues does it raise? Does it shed light on any hidden attributes or qualities of a character? How do the cultural assumptions inside the story differ from and are similar to your own? What mythic elements or religious motifs do you find in the story? How do myths affect the practices

and beliefs in that culture? How does the passage help you understand the story as a whole, its world and tradition? These are some example topics for your presentation.

In addition to presenting your critical response, you must prepare several analysis questions (inspired by the passage you have worked on) for the class to discuss following your presentation.

Your presentation should be about 12-15 minutes. At the end, you must turn in your typed critical response (2-3 pages) attached to a separate sheet of paper with the passage of your choice.

**Essay:** You will analyze a theme or motif found in our reading(s), utilizing outside research, and make an intelligent argument/response in 4-6 pages of polished prose. More specific guidelines will follow.

**Midterm and final exams:** The exams will test your knowledge of readings and discussion topics covered during the first half and the second half of the course through short answer, passage recognition, essay, and/or other question formats.

Note: I reserve the right to alter or revise class policies and requirements for the course.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will not be tolerated. I will follow the English Department policy on plagiarism:

“Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s own original work’ (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including a grade of “F” for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.”

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

### Course Calendar

This is a tentative schedule, which will evolve as the class progresses. Changes will be announced in class, so stay tuned! The date on the calendar is the date the readings are DUE to be discussed in class.

#### Week 1

M Aug 20: Introduction

W Aug 22: Saigyo, *Poems of a Mountain Home*, Watson's introduction and “Spring” chapter (pp. 1-51)

F Aug 24: Saigyo, “Summer,” “Autumn,” “Winter” (pp. 53-102)

Last day to ADD courses

#### Week 2

M Aug 27: Saigyo, “Love,” “Miscellaneous” (pp. 103-221)

W Aug 29: Saigyo, “Poems from the *Kikigaki shu*” (pp. 221-233), loose ends

F Aug 31: Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*

Last day to DROP a course with No Grade/No Charge

Week 3

M Sep 3: No class; Labor Day

W Sep 5: Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*

F Sep 7: Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*

Week 4

M Sep 10: Hesse, *Siddhartha*

W Sep 12: Hesse, *Siddhartha*

F Sep 14: Hesse, *Siddhartha*

Week 5

M Sep 17: Hesse, *Siddhartha*

Last day to Withdraw

W Sep 19: Hesse, *Siddhartha*

F Sep 21: Hesse, *Siddhartha*

Week 6

M Sep 24: Endo, *Silence*

W Sep 26: Endo, *Silence*

F Sep 28: Endo, *Silence*

Week 7

M Oct 1: Endo, *Silence*

W Oct 3: Endo, *Silence*

F Oct 5: Endo, *Silence*

Week 8

M Oct 8: Endo, *Silence*

W Oct 10: **Mid-Term**

F Oct 12: No class; Fall Break